MR. CHAIRMAN: The answers have been so exhaustive.

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: Only one. You just told me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: There is no promise. Chair never promises anybody.

SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA: You told me.

MR. CHAIRMAN: I said, "You may have"; I did not say, "You will have."

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE: Chair need not keep to his commitment.

Indian Settlers in Hong Kong

*183. SHRI LAL K. ADVANI:†
SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the 17,000 odd Hong Kong Indians are facing an uncertain future as Hong Kong is to be trasferred to China in 1997;

(b) whether some of them have mooted a plan to develop the Andaman Islands as a free port; and

(c) if so, what is Government's reaction to the proposal and also to the uncertain future of Indians in Hong Kong?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH): (a) The status of approximately 15,000 Indian passport holders living in Hong Kong is not expected to undergo any change after China resumes sovereignty over Hong Kong from 1-7-1997. However, about 4,500 persons of Indian origin in Hong Kong, who hold British Dependent Territory Citizenship (DBTC) passports, will cease to be BDTCs with effect from 1-7-1997, but will be entitled to hold "British Nationals (Overseas)" passports, which will, however, not give them the right of abode in the U.K.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) No decision has been taken regarding the proposal to develop the Andaman Islands as a free port.

The Government of India are of the view that the BDTCs of Indian origin are the responsibility of the U.K. Government, which should take necessary steps to ensure that they are not rendered Stateless. The Government of India are in touch with the U.K. Government on this matter.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI: Mr. Chairman, this question relates to Indian settlers in Hong Kong, 15,000 of them holding Indian passports and 4,500 of Indian origin holding British passports or what are known as British DTCs. Sir, technically, thse 4,500 holders of British passports are not our responsibility. As the Minister himself has indicated, after 1947 they will cease to be BDTCs but will be entitled to hold "British Nationals (Overseas)" passports which will, however, not give them the right of abode in the U.K. For all practical purposes it seems that the British Government has thrown them overboard. If it had been a question of whites, the British Government would have had a different attitude. But because they happened to be of Indian origin, therefore, it is that the British Government has taken this attitude.

Now, the first question of mine is whether our policy framework in respect of the Indians settled in Hong Kong depends on technicalities alone, and according to which technicality it is the responsibility of the British Government, or do we think that the Government of India is also responsible for ensuring that these compatriots of ours under no circumstances will become Stateless citizens? This is my fire question.

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: The period between...

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have to elaborate the last sentance in your answer: "The Government of India are in touch with the UK Government on this matter." What is it that you are doing?

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Lal K. Advani.

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: We have drawn their attention as I have said that these people are strictly the responsibility of the United Kingdom Government. We have had past precedents. We have the precedent of Kenya and of Uganda. We have told them that they cannot leave these people high and dry.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI: I am not concerned with the British Government, I am concerned with the Government of India, and my question was also very widely worded. I said does your policy framework in respect of the Indians in Hong Kong take into account the need to ensure that all of them belong to some or other State? If the British Government agrees to it, well and good. I have with me the British Government spokesman's statement saying that in the Indo-British Accord in respect of Hong Kong, it is implicit that they will be entitled to stay there. It is implicit. This is what the British Government says. On the other hand, when these people met the Chinese authorities, they replied that the post-1997 fate of the ethnic minorities is purely a British concern. We are not concerned Both the Chinese and the British authorities who are parties to this Accord have taken two diametrically different stances. What is the Government of India's attitude in this regard?

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: The hon. Member has posed a question which is quite honestly not easy to answer. I confess that. He knows the problem himself. There is an agreement reached between the British Government and the Chinese Government on the future status of Hong Kong and that changes their status dramatically on the first July, 1997. Now, in regard to the 15,000 Indians carrying Indian passports there is no problem. They are our responsibility and they can more here. There are these 4,500 Indians who carry British passport. This is a choice they made freely themselves. During the period that they have been there, they could have elected to take an Indian passport because they were Indians. But they did not do so for whatever reasons. I am attributing motives to them. On 1-9-1997 they become entitled to the British Overseas document, which does not entitle them to have a right of abode in the United Kingdom. I think it is extremely unfair. I think the British Government should take a sympathetic attitude. We will go on impressing upon them all throughout and ask them that this is their responsibility. Moreover, numbers are not large. In the case of Falklands they have made an exception, for 1800 inhabitants, also in the case of Gibraltar.

SHRI LAL K. ADVANI: My second question relates to the 16,000 about whom the Government have said naturally they are our responsibility'. In the main answer the Government have said that 'the status of approximately 15,000 Indian passport holders living in Hong Kong is not expected" to undergo any change. Here too there is a sense of doubt as it is said not expected to undergo any change after China assumes sovereignty over Hong Kong after 1997. Though the status may not change, this too is a hard reality that the raison d'etre why they are there the trade and commerce that they have so sucessfully pursued will be destroyed. That will be changed completely. Status may not change so far as citizenship is concerned, that they will continue to be Indian citizens, but the purpose for which they are there will have been totally changed. It is in that context that some of them have made this recommendation, made this suggestion of having a free port in Andamans which happens to be along one of the busiest sea routes. The Minister in his reply has said that no decision has been taken regarding the proposal to develop the Andaman Island as a free port. I would like to know whether there is a difference of opinion between the various departments, say the Commerce Ministry and the Defence Ministry in respect of this proposal. If so, what is the stage at which this proposal has reached? This is a very important matter and it affects not only the Hong Kong settlers but even the future of Andamans. Will the Government consider appointing some high level committee or a parliamentary committee to go into this particular problem in all its aspects? What is the precise position at the present time?

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Sir, the Ministry of Commerce and the Ministry of Home Affairs have been looking at this very carefully. The feasibility of such a project has to be evaluated in terms of physical infrastructural facilities development and also the legal and Constitutional angle, ecological and anthropological considerations will have to be kept in view in the working out of any such scheme or plan for the Island. Now, this matter was taken up by the Committee of Secretaries as late as 5th March, 1987 and various factors with regard to ecology, size of investment, ecnomic viability and security considerations are all being discussed at the moment.

श्री अश्विनी कुमार : माननीय सभापति महोदय, अभी माननीय मंत्री जी ने बताया है कि जो साढ़े चार हजार ब्रिटिश डी० टी० सी० होल्डर्स हैं उनके बारे में में भारत सरकार की ब्रिटिश सरकार से बातचीत चल रही है । अन्य देशों में भी इस प्रकार की नई परिस्थिति आई तो इस प्रकार के ब्रिटिश पासपोर्ट होल्डर्स को ब्रिटिश सरकार ने स्वीकार करने से अस्वीकार कर दिया और अन्ततोगत्वा वे लोग भारत में आए । एक प्रकार से वे रिफ्यूज होकर आए हैं, । अब तक का अनुभव यह रहा है कि जो लोग रिफ्यूजी होकर आते हैं उनके लिए प्राय: दरवाजे खुले नहीं रहते हैं । आज भी काश्मीर के अन्दर जो भारतीय सिटीजन हैं उनका मामला सरकार अभी तक तय नहीं कर पाई है । बंगलादेश से इंफिलट्रेशन हो रहा है, उनके सिटीजनशिप का फैसला एकदम से हो जाता है, लेकिन जो लोग सीधे तरीके से बांय करते उनके बारे में कोई नहीं सोचता है । इस कारण से भारत सरकार की साख दुनिया में घट रही है इस बारे में आप क्या सोच रहे हैं ?

श्री के० नटवर सिंह : श्रीमान मैं समझता हूं कि माननीय सदस्य ने जो प्रश्न किया है उसका उत्तर मैंने आडवाणी जी के प्रश्न के जवाब में दे दिया है ।

SHRI VISHWA BANDHU GUPTA: Would the hon. Minister consider some other Indian port to be a free port for these citizens in case the Andaman Islands are not considered suitable for this purpose?

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Sir, it will be difficult for me to make any prophecy. All I can say is that let us first wait for the report of the concerned committees of Andaman Islands.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA: Sir, these 4,500 persons of Indian origin in Hong Kong may not be our legal responsibility but our moral responsibility. The Minister says that they are in touch with the U. K. Government. May I know from the Minister, what is the official stand of the U. K. Government in this matter so far whether it offers any hope? What alternative the Minister has in his mind if the U. K. Government refuses which appears to be likely?

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Sir, the U. K. Government has said that they will not give them the right of abode. We have said that this is a position which is unacceptable. Now we do have a little time to deal with this problem and we go on making every possible effort to see that justice is done to these 4,500 people.

SHRI KRISHNA KUMAR BIRLA: Sir, the question which I wanted to pose has already been covered by the Minister in reply to the second supplemntary of Mr. Advani.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Minister has in this reply to part (b) of the question has stated that no decision has been taken regarding the proposal to develop Andaman Islands as a free port. Sir, in Andaman Island, people from different parts of the country have settled there. There is a large Tamil population living there particularly in Port Blair area. May I know from the hon. Minister whether the Government before it takes any final decision will take into account the views and wishes of the people who are living there including the tribals?

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Sir, I have no-doubt and the Government will

take into account every possible consideration to see that nothing is disrupted.

SHRI GHULAM RASOOL MATTOO: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the hon. Minister in his reply stated that 4,500 people have opted for the British citizenship voluntarily on their own volition. Now, that has been exercised by them at a particular point of time. Can't they re-exercise that option now and the Government of India will accept that option or give due consideration to that?

SHRI K. NATWAR SINGH: Sir, when this particular problem comes up, we will look at it.

Prospects for breeding of silk worms in North Bihar

*184. SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of TEXTILES be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that natural environment in the Western and Eastern Champaran Districts of North Bihar provide good prospects for breeding of silk worms;

(b) if so, what steps Government have taken or propose to take to increase silk production in these districts; and

(c) what is the number of entrepreneurs who have so far applied for setting up their silk-based industries in these areas?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TEXTILES (SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA): (a) to (c) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Yes, Sir.

(b) State Government of Bihar has set up the following units in East Champaran & West Champaran districts to increase silk production.

1. Two Mulberry Extension-cum-Training Centres at Mothihari & at Betiah.

2. Four Eri, Demostration Centres at Majhauan, Bagaha, Turkaulia and Mahesi.

3. One Basic Seed Supply Station at Balmikinagar.

In order to supplement the State Government's efforts and to provide R&D support, the Central Silk Board has set up 2 Regional Sericulture Research Stations, 2 Extension Centres and a Grainage-cum-Extension Centre in the State.

(c) According to information received from the State Government no entrepreneur has applied for setting up silk-based industries in these districts, so far.

श्री सुरेन्द्रजीत सिंह अहलूवालिया : सभापति महोदय, बिहार हिन्दुस्तान के कुल टसर सिल्क का 58 परसेंट पैदा करता है। मैं आपके माध्यम से मंत्री महोदय से जानना चाहता हूं कि जिस तरह से कर्नाटक में वर्ल्ड बैंक से सिल्क डेवलपमेंट सेंटर खोलने के लिए कुछ व्यवस्था की गयी है, उसी तरह की व्यवस्था क्या बिहार राज्य के लिए भी की जा रही है या नहीं ?

SHRI RAM NIWAS MIRDHA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, Bihar is a major producer of silk and accounts for as much as 70 per cent of the silk produced which is much more than what the hon. Member has mentioned. Sir, we are conscious of the importance of Bihar in this respect and have taken vraious steps, some of which I have mentioned in my answer to see that tusser silk production is properly organised, efficiency is increased and northern Bihar is enabled to play an important role.

Sir, the Central Silk Board have established a Central Research and Training Institute at Ranchi which exclusively deals with tusser silk which is a National Apex Organization for tusser silk and it has a lot of extension and other centres established by the Central Silk Board.

Sir, as regards World Bank assistance, the Karnataka Government had made a